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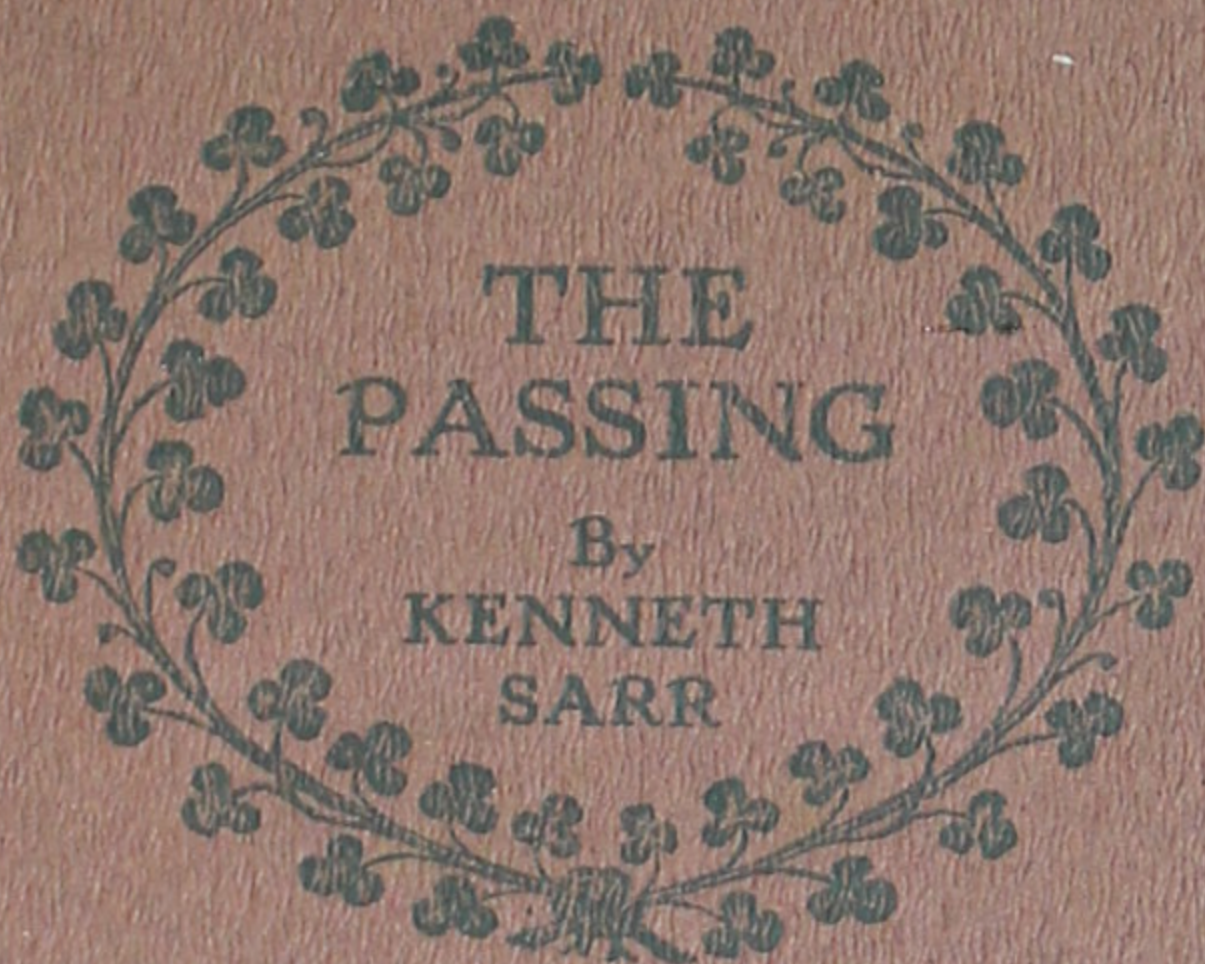
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*Awarded
First Prize in the
Dramatic Section
of . . .
Aonach Talhteann
1924*

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THE PASSING

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Talbot **THE PASSING: A Tragedy**
in One Act by Kenneth Sarr *Full*

OLD TALE PUBLISHING CO. LTD.
SRINAGAR

The Talbot Press Limited
Dublin & Cork
1924

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P R E F A C E

WE are grateful for the honour Aonach Tailteann conferred on us when they asked us to adjudicate in the Dramatic Section, but, indeed, our task has been a difficult one, for it is no easy matter to compare one-act with three-act plays, historical plays with farces, verse plays with prose plays. But almost without hesitation we quickly agreed on the play which merited the first prize, and award it to Mr. Kenneth Sarr for his one-act tragedy—"The Passing." It is a little work of remarkable quality and of high imagination, and one of the judges is not afraid to call it "a little masterpiece." Mr. Sarr submitted another one-act play, not as good, but also possessing high qualities, and his future is one we shall watch with interest.

The second prize was less easy to award, and we hesitated for some time between a play of startling strangeness by Lord Dunsany, called "Lord Adrian," and a play by Mr. T. C. Murray called "Autumn Fire," But, weighing things carefully, it seemed to us that Lord Dunsany's play wasted time in its earlier acts, and that the attention of the audience was likely to be dissipated over people and incidents which later on would be found to have little to do with the real subject of the play; Mr. Murray's construction, on

the other hand, was almost faultless—the play's chief failing, perhaps, is its tendency to be a little verbose—but the play marches on without a deviation, it never changes its mind as to what it wants to interest you in, and we finally decided that it better deserved the prize than "Lord Adrian." But we want to put on record our high appreciation of Lord Dunsany's play. We place it third.

There were other plays sent in for competition which we could not award prizes to, but which we desire to commend.

We mention them now—not necessarily in order of merit.

We praise Mr. Bernard McCarthy for his three-act comedy, "The Rising Generation," and Mr. Brennan and the late Mr. Seumas O'Kelly for their one-act comedies, "The Young Man from Rathmines," and "Meadowsweet"; we praise Mr. Nally for his grim play, "The Spancel of Death"—his treatment falls a little short of his great subject—and Mr. F. Jay, for his fine historical play, "The House of Lynch." Indeed, few of the plays submitted were entirely devoid of merit or without some interest.

(Signed)

JAMES BERNARD FAGAN.
LENNOX ROBINSON.

CHARACTERS :

NANN, *a dying streetwalker.*

JIMMIE, *her son, an idiot.*

THE PASSING

An Attic Tenement room down the Quays of Dublin.

Window Right back: Streaming with light from street lamp outside and overlooking river.

Bed: Centre-left, a chair beside it.

Fireplace: Right.

Door: Left.

Time: Midnight on a frosty Saturday night.

Room: Lit only by reflection street lamp outside.

Fimmie: (at window, not in the least comprehending his mother's hour of death): O-Ow man! but it's cold, mother! . . . They're all gone—the quay's empty. Only an odd . . . (Interested.) There's people. Gor, there was the hell of a crowd to-night; the real Saturday night. O-Ow, it's cold. . . . Are ye there, mother—d'ye hear? . . . Eh, look-a, there's a one and she with a fella. (Leaning out.) Right under here. Look-a . . . O-Ow, the river! Tide's running out; hear the old sewers?.

Nann : Christ !

Jimmie : There's the last tram, buzzing home like an old blue-bottle, only red. There y'are, bobbing and swerving round the corner. Gone !

(Church bell chimes the half-hour.)

Nann : Almighty God !

Jimmie Gor ! them "Taxers." I tell ye, them's that hops it . . . Look-a ! buzzing along like a bloody . . . There's another one with a fella. And Gor ! there's three as can't . . . Look-a what . . . eh, Mother, look-a what them three fellas doing. *(Idiotic laughter.)* . . . *(Musingly.)* Every Saturday night since I was a little lad. Regular. Giving her the news there in the bed. . . . Gor ! the frost. I can see right along the quay. Bright as day. This is a great old spot . . . *(To street lamp.)* Ha, old boy ! but you're doing fine. O-Ow ! such a frost as I ever seen ! The tracks is shining and the poles and the wires. Gor ! such crowds of them. It's like . . . it's like a . . .

Nann : Jimmie ! quick ; For Christ's sake . . . Jimmie ! *(Collapses.)*

(He crab-walks over on his rickety legs, and points to mug on chair.)

Nann : The brandy ! The brandy ! . . .

Jimmie: There y'are. On the chair. What's up with ye to-night, eh? I never seen . . . (*Going on his knees.*) Here!

Nann: Jimmie . . . Jimmie, ye seen a "Jennie" with a fella under the window. . . . Once I was a "Jennie," too. I was one of them . . . I'm dying. Jimmie, I'm going quick . . . Aye, I was a "Jennie," too. Monaghan I came from. You . . . you . . . I had a love-child, and then . . . God! Jimmie! I haven't prayed since the Priory Chapel and I a girl. I'm dying now. Oh . . .

Jimmie: Eh, what the . . . (*Crab-walks back to window, looking over his shoulder at her.*) Eh, are ye in a wax? (*Receiving no reply, and attracted elsewhere.*) Gor! He's shining fine; spewing he is. D'ye hear him? . . . Eh, mother, eh? Are ye . . . (*Leaning out of window.*) They're all gone, mother. Not a soul. Only the lamps over on the bridge. . . . It's all yella-like. Sar a soul at all. . . . Gor; such crowds of poles! . . . There y'are, there's another "taxer"; see the way the laddo goes it. Hoo!

Nann: Jimmie!

Jimmie: Well? What?

Nann (*strange tenderness*): Put on yer coat, lad. You'll be cold. Y'are the only thing I ever had. After, was all dark, dark as the pit.

Jimmie: Well?

Nann: I'm going. I'm going, I know . . . Can ye understand, lad? (*Drinks and continues.*) "Nannie once I was; Nannie the . . . don't look at her; she's one that knows the streets. (*Jimmie steals back to window.*) Oh, Lord! forgive! but I loved him at least, and the boy.

Jimmie (*at window*): D'ye hear them; them bloody cats. Suppose old Poker's up there, too. D'ye hear, d'ye hear? Gor! . . . (*New interest.*) He's after her, eh, mother, look-a can't ye! I'm telling ye what's without; it's better any other night. . . . He is, he's after her. She's took something out of the dust-bin on the corner. . . . Gone on down the quay, she is. (*Whispered.*) Here he is. Look-a! the buttons shining on him. Here y'are! (*Laughing idiotically.*) Blind he is. Not looking the way she's went at all. Gor! such a "gaume"! Them pôlis. . . . There's he standing and him belching and puffing himself out in clouds and he never seen . . . O-Ow the cold!

Nann: Jimmie, come here, Jimmie!

Jimmie (suddenly crouching): Gor! mother, seagulls; look-a! On the bridge, look-a, oh! . . .
(*Retreating from window, afraid, and turning angrily on Nann.*) Well! what the hell's up. Eh, are ye queer, or what?

Nann: Run Jimmie. Quick! The priest! . . .

Jimmie (wild laugh): A priest? . . . is it one of the black coats to come in here?

Nann: God! am I too far gone and the load on me? (*Hysterically pointing to mantelpiece.*) Over there Jimmie! It's for yourself I ask. Over there! (*Collapses.*)

Jimmie (holding bottle to her till she chokes): Damn! Mother . . . I never seen ye like this. . . . (*Deserting her for furtive look at window.*) Them gulls. I'll . . . I'll . . . what the hell they're doing there, eh?

Nann (recovering): Over there. Hit the flue-piece, quick, or . . . Jimmie—oh God! I'm gone! (*Half interested Jimmie crabs to flue-piece, but getting apprehensive again slides back to window.*) The drop of hell will go back and ye'll be clean anyway. . . . Quick. Christy's handkerchief.

Fimmie (spying on gulls): Gor! all along the parapet . . . Like white knobs. . . . There's one flew up . . . gone! . . . All black, only the stars. . . . There's another. . . . Gor! what has them there. White knobs standing on one leg. Eh— oh Gor! what're they waiting for?

Nann: Christ!

Fimmie: . . . Who do they belong? Gor! they won't go away. What're they waiting for? . . .

Nann: Jimmie. . . . Oh, Jimmie.

(With little cry collapses again, her head striking the rail of the bed.)

Fimmie (suddenly anxious, kneeling beside her): The poor head, mother, the poor head. . . . Listen! What are them things outside, eh?

Nann: Quick. . . . Christy's handkerchief. Have ye it?

Fimmie (crabwalking to mantelpiece): Gor! . . . Here, is it, mother; is it here I'm to . . .

(No reply. He "lets fly"; board clatters to floor.)

Nann (sitting up with hideous effort): Christy! Christy Brien. *(As Fimmie jingles red handkerchief full of money.)* Quick! Quick! Let the drop of hell go back and ye'll be clean anyway. . . . Jimmie! the window . . . the window!

Jimmie (seeing her try to leave bed): Sure ye can't! (*Idiotic laughter.*) It's two year since ye tried. (*The woman is half out of bed. He grabs her, and pulling her across room props her upright against window casement in full glare street-lamp. Pause.*) What the hell're they waiting for? Oh! (*nervous cry*) I dunno', I dunno' at all. And the tide's running. I can hear the old sewers. Man! it's grand to have ye, mother, but . . . (*Terror.*) Gor! look-a, the whole parapet. There's a big fella. What . . .

(A jingle of handkerchief recalls him to it and to his mother.)

Nann: Oh, God! I'll mend all now, and leave it as it was. Out Jimmie, out with it. . . . Quick! . . . In the river, child, in the river . . .

Jimmie (jingling): Such a sound!

Nann: Ye'll starve maybe, but ye'll be clean.

Jimmie: Starve? . . . It's there sure, the two-D for the milk. O-Oh. (*Playing with handkerchief.*)

Nann (collapsing): Quick . . . back there to hell in the river.

Jimmie: Is it . . . I'd like to see it in the lamp. Here, am I to let fly, mother?

Nann: Gone, is it gone? . . . Oh, God!

Jimmie: Here y'are! (*Then whimpering and drawing back with nervous cry.*) Oh! I'm frightened, mother. . . . Oh! What're they waiting?

Nann: Jimmie—child!

(*Nann falls to floor as he throws the handkerchief down into river.*)

Jimmie (*suddenly discovering her*): Gor! I . . . eh, mother, listen . . . eh? What's up, eh? . . . mother, eh? Get up! eh . . . Gor! (*Wildly.*) Come on ye old "rann," up with ye! . . . mother, eh . . . eh? O-Oh! (*Mad tension. Suddenly grabs clothes off bed and gets her into a sitting posture, whining all the time.*)

Nann: Oh . . .

Jimmie (*running to peep at window; then retreating to door and standing trembling with fear. *Call of gulls loud*): Gor! . . . gor! . . . clouds of them, clouds! The poles, the wires. . . . The big one on the old lamp seen me. . . . Listen, listen! . . . (*Call of gulls loud.*)

(*Nann stirs.*)

Jimmie (*as if answering*): Yes it's gone, mother, splashed in the river, but . . . Gor! all the white things outside, waiting . . .

(*Nann falls over dead.*)

*Mechanical whistle.

Mother . . . What ails ye, mother . . . mother !
eh, mother ? (*Pause, then he bends to touch her.*)
Cold ! . . . (*Takes hand, shuffles it, and lets it
drop with nervous cry.*) Christ Almighty ! me
me mother's dead ! (*Cries of gulls loud.
With cry of terror he hides behind the bed.*)
They're coming in ! . . . they're coming in
. . . (*Cries of gulls cease. He leaves his
hiding place and goes to window.*) Gone ! they're
gone . . . Gor ! such white stars . . . (*Waddles
to corpse, stands gaping at shadows dancing on
wall opposite the window.*) They're only shadows,
ar'nt they ? Ar'nt they . . . (*Bends to touch
corpse again. Terror seizes him completely, and
he rushes to the door, and clatters upstairs.*) Mary
Hynes ! Mary Hynes ! Mary Hynes !

(*1 a.m. strikes from church tower nearby.*)

CURTAIN.

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